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Science and Art Department.

METROPOLITAN SCHOOL OF ART.

TWO LECTURES

ON THE

ART OF LACE MAKING,

DELIVERED IN

THE LECTURE THEATRE OF THE ROYAL DUBLIN SOCIETY,
ON THE 19TH AND 21ST FEBRUARY, AT 3.30 P.M.

BEFORE

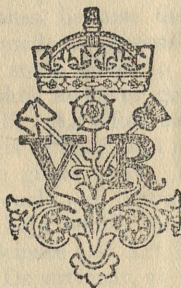
HER EXCELLENCY, THE COUNTESS SPENCER,

BY

ALAN S. COLE, ESQ.,

OF THE

SCIENCE AND ART DEPARTMENT, SOUTH KENSINGTON.



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Science and Art Department
METROPOLITAN SCHOOL OF ART

TWO VOLUMES

ART OF LIFE MAKING

THE PRINCIPLES OF THE ROYAL DUBLIN SOCIETY
OF ART AND THE FINE ARTS, AT 230 P.M.

By J. W. G. Ingalls

OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF ARTS, LONDON

ALAN A. COLE, ESQ.

OF THE

ROYAL SOCIETY OF ARTS, LONDON



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SCIENCE AND ART DEPARTMENT.

METROPOLITAN SCHOOL OF ART.

TWO LECTURES ON THE ART OF LACE MAKING.

FIRST LECTURE.

It may, perhaps, be useful for me to commence my address to you to-day with some explanation of the nature of the work I have been directed by the Science and Art Department to attempt in Ireland. In the first place, that Department has given me its directions, in compliance with a request which was made to it last year by Members of Parliament representing Irish constituencies. As you may remember, exhibitions of Irish embroidery, lace, crochet, and similar work, were held last year in Cork and London. They demonstrated in a conspicuous manner that Ireland possesses an unusual talent for producing such works. But, whilst this talent is strongly developed, the absence of correctly drawn patterns, and indeed of a supply of new patterns is as strongly proclaimed. Hence, although much good workmanship, in the limited sense of the word, is produced in this country, the value of that workmanship diminishes, because the pattern or design which that workmanship is made to represent is, on the whole, poor in character. Without some effort to counteract this poverty in design, the workmanship, however good, must gradually cease to have any value of itself. An effort has, therefore, been made. It is, however, only in its infancy, and requires all the support and tending which can be given to it. The first symptoms that this effort was to be seriously put forward may, I think, be seen in the applications for help which were sent by different schools and convents to the Science and Art Department.

A branch of that Department, as you probably well know, is the South Kensington Museum, where there are collections of works of art of all countries and periods. The Museum may be regarded as a great library of reference as well as a great circulating library. It is, therefore, in a position to render some assistance to all who wish to draw information from it. I believe it contains the most varied and richly furnished collection of embroideries, of lace, and of ornamental textile fabrics that exists as such. Now, amongst the earliest applications which the Department received from centres where lace-work was being actually made, were some from convents and schools. At these places, especially those in

remote districts, as at Kenmare, an acquaintance with fine specimens of laces and embroideries of the best periods could hardly exist. The convents, nevertheless, have shown a praiseworthy spirit in desiring to form this acquaintanceship. Accordingly, a few weeks ago, furnished with specimens of old laces and some photographs of other examples of ornamental needlework, I visited some seven or eight of the convents. We compared the work and designs of the laces made at the convents with the work and designs of those I brought from the Kensington Museum. All *mauvaise honte* was set on one side. The result of the comparison, which at each convent lasted over two hours, was more eloquent and convincing than any discourse. It was evident that the feeling had taken root, that by study and practice new designs could be made, and improved lace produced.

Since then, evidences of a stage beyond this feeling have been manifested. The Department of Science and Art is receiving applications from the convents, for photographs of old laces, and these applications are not mere requests for gratuitous help. They are accompanied by statements of what the convents are prepared to spend in obtaining the photographs. Further than this, one or two of the convents in the neighbourhood of Cork have made arrangements with the School of Art in that city to receive instruction in drawing simple patterns. At the Cork School of Art there is a class where designing for crochet and lace is specially taught, and from which I have little doubt that crochet and lace workers, and crochet and lace dealers, will obtain designs, and so improve their work and enlarge the areas of its sale. I hope similar arrangements will be established at Limerick and at Belfast. I don't know what you intend to do at Dublin. I hope you will be able to do as well as Cork is doing. You have in your admirable Art Museum, on these premises, a most useful collection of old laces here, and you have a School of Art. You, therefore, have the necessary apparatus through the discreet use of which you may help to establish a remunerative domestic industry which can be followed by hundreds of Irish women in their cottages and cabins. The practise of an art like lace-making necessitates personal cleanliness. The lace-maker must keep her fingers clean, and her materials must be kept in an orderly and cleanly state. Any one visiting the cottages of Belgian and French lace-making peasants cannot fail to be struck with the order and cleanliness which reign in them. The habits these lace-makers acquire, obviously have a beneficial influence on their management of home affairs generally. Their earnings may be small; but small earnings and habits of tidiness and economy are better than no earnings and habits of untidiness and wastefulness. It is not necessary for me to dwell longer upon the advantages which may accrue to a people who can successfully possess themselves with domestic industries like lace-making and needlework.

Neither need I do more than refer to the Exhibition of Decorative Art which is being held with advantage to all who go to study it. The influence of the Dublin School of Art Needlework will, no doubt, extend in time to the numerous art needleworkers scattered throughout the country. At present the operations of this young institution cannot be expected to be very extensive. But without therefore further considering what the school has done, and is preparing to do, I will pass to the main subject of the lectures I am to deliver to you. That subject is lace-making by hand—an art which has for upwards of half a century been struggling in this country.

Now, lace, as the subject of a discourse, may be considered under two distinct headings. The first is that which refers to methods of making lace, and the second refers to the patterns used in making lace.

Lace is an ornamental fabric of open texture. It is different from a woven textile, which is, as a rule, of close texture.

There are two classes of lace made by hand—namely, lace made with a needle, and lace made on a cushion or pillow. I will take needlepoint lace in the first place. As its name implies, it is a child of the older art of embroidery, which many centuries ago was so nearly like weaving, a still older art, that it was difficult to draw a precise line between weaving with a small shuttle, and embroidery done with the large wooden, bone, or bronze needle, which dates from long before the fine steel needle we are so well acquainted with now-a-days. The Romans, probably, did not produce embroidery in the same way as we now do. It is likely that in the eleventh century, what we call fine delicate needlework was unknown. But after this time all the arts began to be developed in various countries, Italy taking the lead. During the fifteenth century some most rich and delicate embroidery was made, and although the more sumptuous of the embroideries were done with coloured wools, silks, and gold and silver threads, there was a good deal of linen embroidery. The linen embroidery came into a prominent position in the sixteenth century. Patterns were wrought upon the linens, and from this people passed to other methods of embroidering patterns on linen. A lightness of effect was obtained by cutting little holes and squares out of the linen, and making embroidery about them. Here we have a specimen of such sixteenth century cut embroidery (E¹). Another sort of open embroidery was produced by withdrawing threads instead of cutting out bits of stuff, as for instance in this specimen (D). A third sort of work was the drawing upon net. We have a few squares of it in this cloth (C). The Italian name for this work was “punto a maglia,” and the French name was “lassis” or “lakis.” Limerick work is an embroidery on net, and is therefore related to the old darning on net. There is still another sort of open work which must not be passed by. It is simply a pattern cut out of linen (M), and bordered either, with stitches or

thread of some sort to protect the edge of the cut linen. In this case gold thread is used. This Italian cut-work is, as this (M^a) diagram shows, related to the Carrickmacross work, which is said to have been first made in 1820 in Ireland, that is, roughly speaking, about 250 years after the Italian work was produced.

In these specimens you will have noticed that the needleworker starts from a foundation of linen or net. Here is an English sampler in which we find a combination of embroideries. It was made in 1654, and is an index of the sort of school-work done at that time by young school children.

But a hundred years before this character of open work was made in England, it was known in Italy. Thanks to the energy and inventiveness of the needleworkers, at Venice particularly, a new method of making open embroidery was adopted. The name given to this new work, was "point in the air"—*punt in aria*—and one finds the first mention of it in Italian pattern books of the middle of the sixteenth century. In effect the first results of this new method (L*) were almost undistinguishable from much of the cut and the drawn thread-work. On examination we find that this new "point in the air" was a method of needlework which lent itself ultimately to producing light and delicate textures, as well as much heavier ones.

Now, the way in which this "point in the air" was made is very briefly as follows. Upon a piece of parchment the pattern was drawn; the lines of the pattern were pricked; the parchment was lightly stitched to a piece of linen of the same size as the parchment. These operations were preliminary to the actual construction of the needlework or lace. The first step in constructing the lace was to make a skeleton in thread, of the pattern drawn on the face of the parchment. This thread skeleton was held down to the face of the parchment by loops stitched through the holes which had been pierced in the parchment; these loops therefore passed through the linen fastened to the back of the parchment. The skeleton thread pattern was then overcast with button-hole stitches. The compact portion between the skeleton lines was worked as this diagram shows. When the entire design was thus constructed in needlework it was turned over on to its face. Between the back of the parchment and the linen fastened to it a razor was passed; and thus the loops which had been made through the holes in the parchment were cut. This released the lace from the face of the parchment and so was obtained a piece of needlework which had not been embroidered on to any foundation other than the skeleton thread pattern. Hence it was termed "point in the air"—or *punto in aria*. By making several similar bits of "point in the air," and joining them together, a long border was constructed—which could be used as trimming or an insertion.

This, then, is the process of the first needlepoint lace making. It is virtually the same for all later needlepoint laces. Elaborations

in devices followed—such as fastening bunches of thread upon parts of the lace and overcasting those bunches with very close button-hole stitches. A raised appearance was thus imparted to the lace. Along the edges of these raised portions successions of loops were worked—and here is a specimen in which we may see a great variety of these devices (J). Here again is another pattern also wrought in needlepoint lace, but flatter in effect and more filmy in texture (F 3). This piece was made quite lately at Burano, near Venice, where the art of needlepoint lace-making has been lately revived with considerable success.

A good deal of needlepoint lace is made in Ireland, at Youghal, at Cappoquin, at Kenmare. But up to the present time I have found that the work is done on a paper pattern which is not pricked. The lace worker who has to make a thread skeleton of the pattern has to adjust her thread as best she can. She may not therefore so precisely follow the pattern as when she has the holes of a pricked parchment pattern to guide her.

This is a small matter, perhaps, but I believe it to be an important one. The old workers and designers of patterns understood the best ways for arriving at the completest quality of work. A technical detail such as this of pricking patterns should be considered by designers of lace patterns. Many of the patterns which have emanated from schools of art, not only in Ireland but also in England, are pretty to look at no doubt, but are almost useless. I had occasion to look at one the other day in which the designer had gone so far as to paint very thickly the parts which he wished the lace-worker to carry out in raised work. These very thickly and carefully painted parts prevented a lace-worker from tracing the pattern; and unless the lace-worker—who is quite a distinct person from the designer—can trace the pattern given to her to execute, the pattern is of course of no use to her. Many students in schools of art seem to think that, if they make a careful painting which looks like lace, they have produced a successful design. It would be far better if they drew their designs in outline only, and sent with the drawing a written description of how they proposed that it should be worked out. By examining under a magnifying glass little bits of lace, the designer can soon acquaint him or herself with the leading features of the work, and arrange his or her design so that it may come within the boundaries of what is possible. I hope therefore that the Dublin School of Art will provide itself with a selection of the different varieties of lace done in Ireland, and encourage its students to examine and analyse them with the view of making good practical designs.

Leaving these considerations for the present, I will now pass to the second class of hand-made lace, namely, that which is made on a pillow.

One marked difference between the process of pillow lace-making and that of needlepoint lace-making is, that in pillow lace-making

a number of threads are by turn brought into frequent operation, whereas in needlepoint lace-making after you have made your skeleton pattern in thread you only have one thread in operation for working the stitches, cast over or in between the skeleton pattern.

A further difference is that by the pillow process you never make a succession of button-hole stitches, for the good reason that it would be impossible to do so with bobbins. Plaiting and twisting are the two leading operations in pillow lace-making. In discussing needlepoint lace, I had to refer to embroidery on linen in order to show the out-growth of the needlepoint method. Similarly as regards pillow lace, I must refer to a few early forms of plaiting and twisting, so that, if possible, we may trace the out-growth of pillow lace from such earlier works. Plaited and twisted work in its first phases takes shape in ropes and cords.

Upon the Beni Hassan sculptures, described by Sir Gardner Wilkinson, we have pictorial descriptions of how flax was beaten, the striking of flax after it is made into yarn, twisting the yarn into rope, weaving yarn, and other processes known to the Egyptians, and in operation 2,500 years before Christ. Stepping onwards to 800 years before Christ, we find fringed borders to robes of Assyrian potentates and their servants, sculptured upon monoliths now in the British Museum. This diagram (5) shows a specimen of the border referred to. The trellis pattern, in the upper part, is indicated in the sculpture to consist of round plaited cords, very similar in their make to the leather thong of a whip. The tassels require no description. They speak for themselves. Besides this sort of plaited cords, there were smaller cords, upon which beads and jewels might be strung; there were cords or laces for sandals, and cords for fastening the costume. It is of this kind of lace or cord that we read in the Bible. In Exodus we have mention of "loops of blue on the edge of one curtain;" and further on there is a description how a breastplate was bound "unto the rings of the ephod with a 'lace' of blue." Later again were the nets of golden and silken threads worn by Grecian women. Fillets for binding the hair or tying across the forehead were made of silken and metallic threads plaited into a braid. Passing over the most luxurious period of Roman history, through the decline of the empire, and the development of Christian ecclesiasticism, we may come to the ripest period of the Italian Renaissance, namely, after the year 1450. In vain may we look for indications of pillow, or indeed any lace, in the paintings of that time. Small cords are used along the edges of articles of dress. Sometimes these cords are sewn on to the stuffs; at others they are fashioned into open loop work along the edges. This open loop work is apparently the "purling" spoken of by fifteenth century authors.

In a MS. of about 1471, directions are given for the making "of lace Bascon, lace indented, lace bordered, lace covert, a brode

lace, a round lace, a thynne lace, an open lace, lace for hatty's," &c. The MS. opens with an illuminated capital letter, in which is the figure of a woman at work. A clear description is given of how threads in combinations of twos, threes, fours, fives, to tens, and fifteens, were twisted and plaited together. The result was the production of various cords and braids, articles which might be twisted about a hat or stitched on to jackets. Instead of pillows, bobbins, and pins, hands and fingers were used. Each finger served as a peg. Upon each finger was placed a "bowys," bow or ball of thread. The threads from these several balls were plaited or twisted into one or other of the cords or laces above named. When a thick or a broad lace had to be made, the MS. tells us that the worker should take a fellow assistant and place him on his right or left hand. The worker was thus furnished with ten fingers or pegs for as many balls of thread. For still more important work, two assistants—one standing on each side of the worker, might be required. A process like this, involving the employment of so many people to produce a small article like a cord, leads us, I think, to reflect upon the immense change which has been effected in four hundred years, not only in respect of the allotment of a superior sort of labour to be done by hands, but also as regards the increased demand for trivial articles. The picture of men and women holding up their fingers to be used as pegs is humorous, and recalls Adam Smith's opinion upon the division of labour, that people so meanly employed "must have lost habits of exertion, and become as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for human creatures to become."

A very necessary little implement in making pillow lace is the pin. "Pins formed of wire seem to have been unknown in England until about the middle of the fifteenth century, before which time they were larger then the present pins and were made of boxwood, ivory, bone, and some few of metal. In Richard III.'s time, about 1483, there was a prohibitory statute against the importation of pins. Queen Catherine Howard is said to have imported them into England about fifty years later, and at this time Henry VIII. sanctioned an Act to regulate the true making of pynnes." They were to be well pointed, with heads firmly soldered on to the stems. The price of them was not to be more than 6s. 8d. or say about 80s. of our money, per thousand. Though used as dress fasteners, it is evident from the value quoted, that pins cannot have been at all plentiful. The manufacture of them seems to have been of foreign origin, and when once fairly started, it developed rapidly. On the Continent, in Italy, Germany, Spain, and France, pins became almost sufficiently numerous for common use about the latter part of the sixteenth century. And it is at this period when I think we find that the making of pillow lace commenced.

The specimen I now show you (A) is entirely of plaited and twisted thread work. It is a sort of work which at the present time is

produced under the name of Maltese and Cluny lace. This specimen however belongs to a sixteenth century Italian shirt. Such work was made for some time before the ordinary pillow lace which we now know so well was made.

The process of pillow or cushion lace-making is briefly as follows:—A pattern is first drawn upon a piece of paper or parchment. This pattern is then pricked. The prickings are to guide the lace-maker where she should place the little pins, around and about which she plaits and twists the threads from her bobbins. The pricked pattern is then fastened to the pillow. The pillow or cushion may vary in shape. Some lace-workers use a circular pad, flattened at the back, so that it may be placed flatly upon their work-table. Other lace-makers use a well-stuffed round pillow or little bolster, which they can hold between their knees. On the upper part of the pattern are fastened the ends of the threads from the bobbins, which therefore hang downwards over the pattern.

In the diagram (6) before us, we see six bobbins plaiting two sets of plaits about three pins or fixed points. In this diagram (7) you will see that to make a single mesh of this description eight bobbins are required, and we might use twelve pins or fixed points. I will now show you a series of meshes of real pillow lace (N 2). In actual lace, this series occupies a space of about an inch and a half square. From this fact you may roughly calculate how many bobbins and threads were brought into use within this small space. By another slide I will show you the magnified appearance of the close part of a piece of lace. What we have just been looking at were meshes which form the grounding between the pattern. Here is (Q) the close plaiting used for the close portions of patterns. Here, too, you will notice some meshes, and that they are different in make from those previously looked at. These are characteristics of workmanship as distinct from design. Important lace-making centres developed those and other technical characteristics. Before designing for pillow lace these and similar characteristics should be studied.

There is a wide difference in appearance between the textures of pillow and needlepoint lace, which may be illustrated by these diagrams (9 and 2). Similarly there is a difference in appearance between hand and machine-made laces. Here is a pillow lace, and here its imitation by machinery (G³). Here is a needlepoint lace of delicate texture, and here its imitation by machinery (O³).

Some of the principal points of difference between hand-made and machine-made lace are these:—With the hand, as we have seen, we can plait, twist and loop into buttonhole stitches, the threads with which we make our lace. Our thread can be of the lightest and finest flax. With the machine, twisting and inter-twisting are the foremost, and I think I may almost say, the only operations. The tension to which the threads in a machine are subjected is such, that an admixture of cotton with the flax

becomes necessary. Hence, whilst lace made by the hand, with pure flax threads, has a soft and pliant texture, that made by machinery, no matter how fine, is comparatively hard and wiry. The process of making lace by machinery has been fully described by Mr. Felkin, of Nottingham, in his book on the subject; and I do not propose now to attempt a description of the machine and its operations. Thousands of yards of lace can be made in a day by a single machine, whereas but a foot or two of simple-patterned narrow lace can be made in a day by a single lace-worker; but then, as I said, she can introduce into her work a plait or particular loop, which the machine cannot accomplish. It is the appreciation of such features in workmanship which must lead people to really care for productions of handicraft, as distinct from those of steam-driven machinery. Besides this, the lace-maker is not bound to a single pattern, she may make a foot of one pattern and the next foot of another. With the machine, in order that its productions may be remunerative, you have to decide upon a single pattern and then manufacture so many thousands of yards of it. Every change of pattern involves considerable expense in specially adjusting the machinery to weave it.

Nevertheless, occasions arise, no doubt frequently, when people who are content with superficial effects, confuse machine-made with hand-made lace; as, for instance, when the wife of a Nottingham lace-maker was in Paris, with her husband, they were looking into one of the shop-windows, on the Boulevards, where she saw some lace of exquisite fineness and delicacy, as she thought. The price of it was 240 francs. She entered the shop and was on the point of buying it when her husband, by mysterious signs, deterred her. With charming obedience, she gave up her intention, and, quitting the shop, asked her husband why he had prevented her from buying so beautiful a piece of lace? To which her husband replied:—"You are quite right, my dear, it was a beautiful piece of lace, but it happens to come from my own works, at Nottingham, and when you get home I can let you have as many pieces as you like for fifteen shillings a piece."

On Thursday afternoon, I hope to deal with the various classes of patterns which have been used for lace-making.

SECOND LECTURE.

Thursday, 21st February, 1884.

During my lecture this afternoon I propose bringing before you representations of patterns used for laces made from the sixteenth century onwards, from which some conception may be formed of the variety of motives, and arrangements of motives, which enter into lace patterns. It is not within my present purpose to discuss the goodness or the badness of these patterns. Goodness and badness are perhaps relative terms employed to indicate an adherence to or a departure from principles which, I believe, must be observed by those who propose to compose ornamental designs. Such principles enter into the domain of æsthetics. They stand in relation to the composition of ornament as the books of Euclid do to mathematical problems. They are, in fact, to the would-be designer what grammar and syntax are to the would-be literary man. Without them and without good drawing, designs become absurdities, and I am sorry to say that very often these absurdities are grouped by inconsiderate persons under the title of types of national art. Their faults of drawing are thus condoned. Here now is an illustration of a so-called specimen of typical Cretan design. (B 3). The actual twisting and plaiting of the threads are excellent. In the upper specimen you will see a nondescript central form. On each side of it appears a rudely drawn bird. Here we have an expression of balance of form. Adopting this principle, and using more carefully drawn details, it is quite possible to perceive that a design based on this principle and having good artistic merit could be produced. The central piece might be held to be still more ambitious in aim. Here we have a Cretan's representation of a series of figures joining hands, perhaps walking or dancing. The central idea of human figures grouped as a procession has been used by the most gifted of artists. We may find it in classic sculpture, and painted upon classic pottery. But, then, in those works the longer we look at them the greater is the number of effects to be discovered in them. This number of effects is due to the skill and inventiveness of the artist. Hence, although subjects or leading ideas of design may, as in a case like this of a series of figures, be as old as man himself, the ways in which these subjects are to be depicted or designed, are virtually infinite in number. The untrained man may attempt to represent them, but, as a rule, his representation of them possesses but few points worth noticing. In this Cretan lace the designer meant to have a procession. He drew one figure, and then repeated that figure several times without variety. His design is monotonous. He had not the inventive power nor the manual skill to do better. His design appears ludicrous to us. But

instead of merely laughing at it I think we may learn something from it, if we take it that the work was not done as a joke. These bits of lace were, no doubt, the serious work of Cretans, who, having probably seen bits of lace worn by strangers and others visiting the island, thought they would make lace themselves. In this respect the Cretans did what thousands of other people have done in all branches of art. For a time this barbaric lace—which is capital so far as the plaiting of the threads is concerned—was made. But in due course, when those who cared about such eccentricities had been sufficiently supplied, the Cretans found it of no use to go on making such lace. No one cared to give the Cretans new patterns to work from, and so lace-making in Crete gradually died out and is now extinct. Now to some extent we may see that the condition of Irish hand lace-making, and indeed English hand-made lace resembles that of the Cretan. In all these cases, the drawing and composition of the patterns have not been sufficiently considered, although neither the Cretan nor the Irish lace designer has been deterred from attempting to render difficult and complex forms in their lace.

As an example of simplicity of form and design, I may show you these specimens (C 3) of work made by Russian peasants. The subject here is not of so ambitious a character as the birds and the figures of the Cretan. Straight lines to form diamond shapes, and twisting lines to form fan shapes are here used, and the repetition of those motives produces an ornamental result, which, if humble in aim, is not devoid of effect. The Russian lace-makers do not enjoy opportunities for improving themselves and their work similar to those which we can enjoy if we please in this country.

And in respect of these opportunities, so far as the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art is concerned, I would like to add to the remarks I made on Tuesday. In the first place, I hope that all who are interested in this question of Irish lace-making will take the trouble to convince themselves that a constant supply of new and beautiful patterns is essential to preserve lace-making as a remunerative domestic industry in Ireland. I don't ask them only to accept my statement that this is so. Assuming, however, that by looking into the question themselves, they come to the conclusion that new patterns can be of use to Irish lace-making, then I would say that here in Dublin you have almost all that is essential to you to enable you to produce good and new patterns. Mr. Lyne, the head master of this School of Art, can direct your studies of the specimens of old laces in the Museum, and can instruct you in the principles of composing design. There are many students in this School of Art who devote the chief part of their time and energies to making careful chalk drawings, and to attempting portraiture and painting, work very charming, but apparently (judging from past results) not bringing much material benefit to their fellow-creatures. Of

course this sort of work may have been important in a course of general artistic cultivation—but I cannot help thinking that some of the time might have been more usefully given to the study of examples of ornament wrought in various materials, and to the precise and practical application of those æsthetic principles which a philosophic investigation of the elements of art seems to reveal. Had this been so, the Dublin School of Art might have taken a higher position as a real school of practical design than it at present holds. There is a demand for new lace-patterns, and students in the Irish Schools of Art can, if they choose, respond to it. There is a demand also for designs for embroidery of all sorts. And to this Irish Schools of Art can respond if they choose.

I am aware of the efforts which have been made by the Dublin School of Art to produce designs—but I think the present condition of the demand for patterns proves that a far stronger effort is expected of the school.

However, I must now turn to the more immediate subject of this afternoon's lecture, and try to show you in narrow limits the development of lace patterns from borderings to dresses and robes, used long before lace itself was made.

First, we might take the fringed Assyrian border, 800 B.C., of which I spoke yesterday. Then, I may show here, a border from a costume upon the famous column of the Emperor Trajan at Rome, dating from the second century. After this period, there are endless carvings, paintings, and mosaics, in which patterns are given. Here is a series of fringed borders and patterns dating from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries—many of such were woven—some embroidered—but none of them are what we can call lace. Besides the embroidering and weaving, borders used to be cut into fanciful shapes—and here is a rough sketch of a series of such shapes. These were called points—and cut-works. A poet of our King Edward IV.'s time writes of such things that—

“Cut werke was great in court and towns,
Both in men's hoddies and also in their gowns;”

and paintings of the period especially Italian frescoes, prove the truth of the poet's statement. We now get to that period of which I spoke yesterday, when the embroidering and trimming of white linens came into fashion. Venice was the place where this fashion first arose, and apart from the improvement in using flax and making fine linens for under garments, there seems to me to be another reason why the ornamental treatment of linen under-garments, of cuffs, and collars, should have arisen at this time. It is briefly this. A very great luxury in splendid costumes of silks and velvets, coloured embroideries, and gold and silver thread enrichments to dresses of men and women, reached so high a pitch of extravagance, that the government of Venice determined to check it. They issued edicts against it; and one result of the municipal concern to

secure economy in dress was that people invented some other way of indulging their tastes. As I have indicated, embroidery was extensively practised by all classes of people. Artists designed, and wood-engravers published patterns which might be used especially for the linen garments, shirts, cuffs, and collars, which were not under the ban of the edicts. Thus, a proverb arose at this time—"la camicia preme assia piu dell giubbone"—or "the shirt before the coat."

Now here is the front of an Italian 16th century shirt. Here, a specimen of ornamental work inserted into the shoulders of it. Here again is one of its cuffs trimmed with open ornamental work, the shape of which is like the dentated cut work of the preceding century. Here are specimens of scallops and here are others in which the simple dentated shape has been supplanted by a sort of trefoil quatrefoil shape. Fashion in using such things spread itself over the countries in relation with Venice, such as the northern parts of Italy, South German towns, Rhenish towns, Flemish towns, French and English towns. Great ruffs were worn round the neck, and great cuffs at the wrists. Contemporary portraits of Italian, French, Flemish, and English notabilities supply us with examples of these immense ruffs. They grew to enormous and absurd sizes, and were laughed at by some people; amongst others, by some students who, meeting King Henry III. of France with a great ruff round his neck at St. Germain, near Paris, shouted out "*à la fraise on connait le veau*"—"a calf's head trimmed with frills," for which the students were taken into custody. The insertions and borders of lace which were in use at this time were of the character of this specimen.

In all these examples the motives of the design—squares, circles, triangles—are geometric in construction. But as time went on, the patterns became freed from the geometric restrictions, and here we have another class of pattern in which curves and blossoms and human forms can be seen. In respect of this, I should direct your notice to the way in which the details of the ornament touch one another. Later on bars or links were inserted between such details, and much later again grounds of meshes were used in the lace patterns. The links and bars and the meshed grounds helped to give a new character to the designs. Here now is an early 17th century pattern in which bars or links are largely used. Both the details of the pattern and the bars and links between them are of equal importance, so that the effect of the ornament is confused, and it is difficult to distinguish the ground of bars from the details of pattern. Hence the value of these details is reduced to a minimum.

Very soon, however, designers had perceived this, and, consequently, gave greater distinctness to the grounds upon which their patterns rested. And here is an early 17th century pattern, in which we have masses of ornament gaining their due value through contrast with a well-marked ground. There is a variety

of motives, heraldic and otherwise, in this piece. Here is a double-bearded eagle, and here the badge of the Order of the Golden Fleece.

Of a different class both of workmanship and design is this fine specimen of 17th century Venetian raised needlepoint lace. Here we have a rich pattern, with the minimum of bars or links. This specimen contains a great variety of ornamental details, each of which were developed as leading features in other designs. We have here not only the fine bold scrolls enriched with floriated forms, but also, a building-up of stitching, which gives a play of shadows on the lace, gaining an effect not unlike ivory carved in low relief. The little ties between the masses of ornament are decorated with little loops. Between the lines of the flowing forms we find all sorts of small diaperings and such like.

Of the same kind of work is this specimen in which the designer has composed a ground of hexagons, and then distributed over it, in well-balanced arrangement, a number of ornamental forms. In contrast to this I will show a piece of Irish crochet work. It is a good representative specimen of what is now done. You will notice that the harmoniousness which marked the previous specimen is absent from this. The details in this crochet work have no such flowing relationship to one another as we found in the previous specimen of Venetian lace. They are brought together in some sort of order, but even this is made to look irregular through the varying sizes of the bars or links which hold the details together. Now this is a fair specimen of Irish crochet work. The sort of heedlessness in respect of the pattern has been thought to be a characteristic desirable to retain, because it is typical of National Irish art. No greater mistake can be made. It is typical of rude and uncultivated art and nothing else. Now the rude forms so often to be seen in crochet work are perpetuated, because they are easily made by the workers and readily bought by the crochet dealers. The consequence is, as I was told at a Convent in county Cork, that crochet workers have little ambition to learn to do other patterns. They know how to work half a dozen forms, and they get into the way of doing their work almost mechanically. Little or no thought has to be exercised. I was told that this sort of labour is attended with demoralization. On the other hand, where the worker is required to engage her intellectual faculties upon the design she is carrying out, no similar demoralization is noticeable. The demand for crochet is, I believe, on the decline; and this decline is no doubt very much to be ascribed to the stagnant state of design in that industry. Release it from this stagnancy and apart from improving trade, you would, I believe, improve the moral condition of the worker.

To return however to the review of lace patterns.

Now here is an example of well balanced ornament. The lace is Venetian or French of about 1650. The ornament conventional,

but see with what fertility of invention the designer has developed his pattern. To compare with this, I have a pattern of Carrickmacross work made last year, in which we find a mixture of blossoms with conventional ornament. Whereas in the Venetian pattern we had much to study and find out, here there is a simplicity, to produce which not much imagination or invention can have been necessary. Simplicity is often most effective and desirable. But where fancy and ingenuity can be exercised to the advantage of workmanship and propriety, it is, I believe, well to encourage them. Much new effect could be obtained for Carrickmacross work, if more fancy and ingenuity were shown both by designer as well as worker.

How was it that, in spite of the varied laces which had been designed and produced up to the middle of the 17th century, fresh phases of design and work were produced?

The answer to this question leads us into history. It also transfers us from Italy to France. All the examples we have looked at were in the main chiefly Italian. A very few were Flemish, and none, I think, Spanish. We often hear of Spanish point, as a very distinct class of lace, but as far as I can learn, the bulk of what we call Spanish lace is Italian. Even the typical black silk mantilla of Spain was most prized when it was made by French hands, from French designs at Chantilly. However, it is to what France did in the middle of the 17th century that I must now allude. She was under the paternal influence of a great King, He and his Court had an almost insatiable appetite for all sorts of works of art. Amongst others the fine raised Venetian lace had become an article of necessity to them in their costume. But this was not enough. The King wished to see his own people making as good work as the Venetians. A talent for making lace of humble design had already displayed itself in the French people, and the King determined that that talent should be developed. Accordingly he instructed his Minister Colbert to see to it. And in a short time Colbert by dint of intrigue, managed to secure the services of good lace-makers and designers from Venice. These foreigners were in the first instance set to work for the King, a few French lace-makers were associated with them. And at length, the idea was conceived of establishing centres for lace-making in various parts of France. A Company was started to raise the capital, towards which the State made a very considerable contribution. It is at this time that we begin to hear of Alençon and Argentan. The first productions of these places were exactly like the Venetian laces. But French taste and French thought caused other patterns to be made. And there was very good reason for this, for France had been undergoing a very distinct artistic cultivation during the preceding one hundred and fifty years.

I have not a sufficient number of diagrams to show you the gradual changes from the conventional and dignified scrolls of the Venetian to the more playful and floral patterns of the French. I am therefore obliged to pass at once to an illustration in which we find a mixture of conventional and floral forms.

The conventional ornament becomes a sort of frame work for sprays or bunches of flowers. Again, here are specimens of old Valenciennes laces, the patterns for which were probably derived from France. Purists may demur to such mixture of conventional and floral forms. Nevertheless, the drawing of both is as a rule correct whilst that of the flowers is generally extremely good in rendering the broad character of these botanical forms. The arrangement of the bunches or bouquets is graceful.

For needlepoint laces, the Irish lace-makers have adopted floral forms to a large extent. As a rule these forms are neither well constructed nor well drawn. The character of the forms is damaged, I think, by the plethora of little ornamental stitches which are used to depict the surfaces of the leaves and petals. It seems as though the value of these little ornamental stitches was not understood, and as though it were considered that the greater the massing together of wheels and stars and spots, and spiders' webs, the richer the effect. This I believe to quite a mistake. These little ornamental elaborations gain in artistic importance by being more sparingly used, and brought out by contrast with quite plain stitching. Plain stitching would be uninteresting unless it were applied to forms which are graceful and well distributed. If more thought be given to the better use of the ornamental stitches and filling-in, improvement I hope will follow in the drawing of the forms which may be suitably rendered with plain stitches.

And now I may show you what I think is a fair specimen of needlepoint design made at Irish Convents. I need not particularize the Convent from which this specimen comes. Remembering the care with which the floral forms were drawn for the Valenciennes and Alençon laces, we cannot fail to be struck by the awkward drawing of the flowers, stems and leaves in this specimen. Every detail apart from its caricature of natural forms is out of proportion when brought into relation with its neighbour. The delicate stem of this blossomed sprig is more like the gaunt trunk of a tree, and yet the needlework is excellent.

In the Decorative Art Exhibition I saw a great piece of this sort of work, the design of which was a direct imitation of a flounce of late Venetian lace. I believe this piece has won a very high prize. It carried off the honours last year in its particular class at the Mansion House Exhibition. It is in a way a *tour de force*, but it is so complex in composition, the forms are so varied, so heterogeneous, that I am afraid it is liable to be very much misunderstood. The design was doubtless all very well for a school of practised lace-workers like the Venetians to indulge in once in a way, as an outburst of fantastic expression, but it is not one as a whole which I should venture to recommend to any of the Irish lace-makers to adopt. Much technical knowledge may be learnt from a study of its details, but it is a sort of audacious defiance of principles of composition in design, such as appropriateness and simplicity. These two principles are, I think, most

necessary to be observed in designs for Irish laces, which in the main should be for small articles of use purchasable by a large number of people.

I referred on Tuesday to the Lace School at Burano, and here from that school I have a specimen of a class of design which is not unworthy of being studied. It is a combination of floral and conventional forms. Although of a highly florid tendency, the general appearance of the design is, I think, pleasant. The ornamental stitches and fillings-in are not too lavishly used. They are contrasted well with the plain work, and the florid character of the leaves and flowers gain in effect by being fairly well distributed over a ground of simple trellis work.

Our review of lace patterns will be incomplete without a reference to the patterns which succeeded the bouquets and garlands of flowers. These consisted of little buds or sprays, repeated over and over again, along a ground of small meshes. And here we have an example of it in a piece of Mechlin lace.

Her Majesty the Queen has been graciously pleased to cause photographs to be made of one or two large and interesting specimens of lace in her possession, which I have laid on the table, and which I hope you may care to come and look at on the conclusion of the lecture. The largest specimen is of Brussels pillow lace. A feature in this class of Brussels Lace is the relief or modelling imparted to the flowers. I have a small example of this lace, which shows this character of modelling. Honiton lace has been done in this style. The Devonshire lace-makers learnt the art of lace-making from the Flemish, and for a time made some remarkable work. But from want of organized training in making new and good patterns, the industry has dwindled down almost to zero. The famous Point d'Angleterre, I may here remark, was a Flemish lace, made specially for the English market, about the end of the 17th century.

In Ireland scarcely any pillow lace is made. At Carrickfergus, the peasants used, I understand, to make small pillow laces. This particular art is being revived by the Convent at Parsonstown, and they have taken as their model the Honiton lace. Here is a specimen of their work. Their attention has now been drawn to the older Flemish laces, and to the greater range of patterns to be there found, than in the Honiton. And I hope soon that they will produce new patterns which will be acceptable to the public. Much of their lace can be used in conjunction with net, to which it may, like the modern Brussels lace, be applied.

National emblems, such as the harp and the shamrock have often appeared in Irish laces. And with proper treatment, such subjects may doubtless be used with ornamental effect. In this specimen of Limerick embroidery on net, we have the harp lacking the elegance of shape which well proportioned limbs might give it. I think, as a National emblem, it deserves better treatment in the country of its adoption.

There are a number of incidents connected with the production of designs which I have not touched upon. As it is, I fear I have gone into a number of minute details, interesting for discussion before a small class of students, but distracting in a general public discourse. I have tried to keep the main subject of patterns in lace-making before me, although I feel I have strayed away at times and indulged somewhat freely in my personal opinions. I may fairly say however, that I have been encouraged to do so by the marked interest you have shown in the subject of lace-making and its importance as a domestic industry in this country. Its successful development must depend upon discriminating direction in regard to the production and consumption of its results. Public exhibitions and the offer of prizes to be awarded by competent judges, may stimulate efforts. But in the main, it is a matter of trade, and I believe the trade will consult its commercial interests best, by looking further ahead than it has done at present. The organization of labour, distribution of good patterns, and supervision of work are each of them, subjects demanding a larger amount of consideration on the part of lace dealers than appears heretofore to have been given to them.

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